

§ 452.34 Application of section 504, LMRDA.

The eligibility of members of labor organizations to be candidates and to hold office in such organizations is subject only to the provisions of section 504(a), which bars individuals convicted of certain crimes from holding office in labor organizations²³ and to reasonable qualifications uniformly imposed. A person who is barred from serving in union office by section 504(a) is not eligible to be a candidate. However, a labor organization may permit a person who is barred from holding union office by section 504(a) to be a candidate for office if the section 504 disability will terminate by the customary date for the installation of officers. A labor organization may within reasonable limits adopt stricter standards than those contained in section 504(a) by extending the period of disability or by barring from union office persons who have been convicted of crimes other than those specified.

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§ 452.35 Qualifications for candidacy.

It is recognized that labor organizations may have a legitimate institutional interest in prescribing minimum standards for candidacy and office-holding in the organization. On the

²³The disabling crimes set forth in the Act, sec. 504(a), as amended by sec. 803 of the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, Public Law 98-473, (29 U.S.C. 504) are robbery, bribery, extortion, embezzlement, grand larceny, burglary, arson, violation of narcotics laws, murder, rape, assault with intent to kill, assault which inflicts grievous bodily injury, or a violation of title II or III of this Act, any felony involving abuse or misuse of a position or employment in a labor organization or employee benefit plan to seek or obtain an illegal gain at the expense of the members of the labor organization or the beneficiaries of the employee benefit plan, or conspiracy to commit any such crimes or attempt to commit any such crimes or a crime in which any of the foregoing crimes is an element."

NOTE: The U.S. Supreme Court, on June 7, 1965, held unconstitutional as a bill of attainder the section 504 provision which imposes criminal sanctions on Communist Party members for holding union office; *U.S. v. Brown*, 381 U.S. 437.

other hand, a dominant purpose of the Act is to ensure the right of members to participate fully in governing their union and to make its officers responsive to the members. A basic assumption underlying the concept of "free and democratic elections," is that voters will exercise common sense and good judgment in casting their ballots. In union elections as in political elections, the good judgment of the members in casting their votes should be the primary determinant of whether a candidate is qualified to hold office. Therefore, restrictions placed on the right of members to be candidates must be closely scrutinized to determine whether they serve union purposes of such importance, in terms of protecting the union as an institution, as to justify subordinating the right of the individual member to seek office and the interest of the membership in a free, democratic choice of leaders.

§ 452.36 Reasonableness of qualifications.

(a) The question of whether a qualification is reasonable is a matter which is not susceptible of precise definition, and will ordinarily turn on the facts in each case. However, court decisions in deciding particular cases have furnished some general guidelines. The Supreme Court in *Wirtz v. Hotel, Motel and Club Employees Union, Local 6*, 391 U.S. 492 at 499 (1968) held that:

Congress plainly did not intend that the authorization in section 401(e) of 'reasonable qualifications uniformly imposed' should be given a broad reach. The contrary is implicit in the legislative history of the section and in its wording that 'every member in good standing shall be eligible to be a candidate and to hold office * * *.' This conclusion is buttressed by other provisions of the Act which stress freedom of members to nominate candidates for Office. Unduly restrictive candidacy qualifications can result in the abuses of entrenched leadership that the LMRDA was expressly enacted to curb. The check of democratic elections as a preventive measure is seriously impaired by candidacy qualifications which substantially deplete the ranks of those who might run in opposition to incumbents.

Union qualifications for office should not be based on assumptions that certain experience or qualifications are necessary. Rather it must be assumed